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AUTHOR Gim, Wever; Litwin, Tybel
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ABSTRACT

Five case studies describe experiences in the resettlement of Indochinese refugees in Albuquerque, New Mexico; San Diego, California; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Minneapolis-Saint Paul, Minnesota; and Des Moines, Iowa. The case studies focus on local government and community attitudes toward the refugees; patterns of resettlement; and the nature and extent of health, housing, welfare, employment, and educational services that have been made available to them. It is suggested that there is a wide disparity among the states in their receptivity to the refugees, their management of the resettlement process, and their administration of public assistance. However, it is indicated that there is general resentment of the refugees among other low income groups competing for jobs and housing, and that community attitudes toward the refugees are likely to become less hospitable as competition for reduced Federal funding sharpens. Observing that Indochinese refugee resettlement is widely seen as the Federal government's responsibility, the report emphasizes that Federal policies and funds alone cannot assure successful programs, and that the keys to success in refugee resettlement lie in community education, community-private sector cooperation in refugee employment, and other initiatives at the local level. (Author/MJL)

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A Case Study

WEVER GIM TYBEL LITWIN

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INDOCHINESE REFUGEES IN AMERICA:
Profiles of Five Communities

By Tybel Litwin and Wever Gim

SUMMARY

The United States has admitted some 320,000 Indochinese refugees since 1975. The rate of entry has accelerated under monthly quotas doubled in mid-1979, rapidly outdistancing the gearing up of federal, state, and local mechanisms to handle the influx. Archaic provisions relating to refugees in U.S. immigration laws and the absence of clear definition of American intentions, commitments, and priorities have impeded the development of orderly programs for refugee admission and resettlement. Disparate programs have mushroomed in response to one emergency after another. Enactment this March of the Refugee Act of 1980 comes about 20 years too late.

While the Refugee Act now provides a better framework in which integrated policies can be developed, a host of issues relating to the reception and resettlement of refugees has yet to be resolved. Policy planners face formidable tasks in trying to bring order to the patchwork of arrangements by which the country so far has been coping with the flow of refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

While Cubans far outnumber the Indochinese in the United States, they come from next door and they speak a language that is widely taught in American schools. The majority of the Indochinese coming into the country now are rice farmers and fishermen with no exposure to life in a modern urban society, no understanding of American culture, little or no education in their own languages, and little or no English. An enormous language/culture gap separates them from the ability to acquire the skills necessary for gainful employment and elimination of dependence on welfare.

There is no disagreement over self-sufficiency for the refugees as the major goal of resettlement, but there are differences over how to achieve it. Early job placement, looking toward acculturation by total immersion, is favored by many people in principle. But principle goes by the board in places where jobs are in short supply, and these are often the places where the Indochinese cluster because of the climate and the presence of friends or relatives.

Our profiles of five U.S. localities focus on official and community attitudes toward the Indochinese refugees and approaches to this complex of problems. We started with the assumption that there is resentment of the refugees among other low-income groups competing for jobs and housing. We found that assumption to be accurate. Among many state and local government officials, we found receptivity to the refugee resettlement efforts to be commensurate with the degree to which the Federal Government picks up the bill. Indochinese refugee resettlement is widely seen as a Federal Government responsibility. If it is to be viewed as a national responsibility, which is something different, far more effective community education will be needed. We also see a need for a re-examination of funding priorities in line with more cohesive national policies. But federal policies, guidelines, and funds cannot alone assure successful programs. The keys to success are at local levels.

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FOREWORD

In embarking on a study of the domestic impact of Indochinese resettlement, we strayed into a very large arena. The first thing we learned is that there are innumerable estimates but few reliable statistics. Patterns of resettlement are in flux, as are the mechanisms for monitoring them. Circumstances vary throughout the 50 states. With limited time and with full knowledge that there is no "typical" community, we focused our investigations on five which we felt might illustrate some of the common elements as well as the range of differences. They are not all places that have been heavily publicized. We stayed away from communities already impacted with investigators. We offer our conclusions with the caveat that they are based on glimpses of a large edifice through five small windows.

We are grateful to the many people who provided us with the perspective in which to conduct our researches. In Washington they include Tom Barnes and Jere Broh-Kahn of the State Department, Dan Baker of HEW, Wally Warfield of the Department of Justice, Ann Heald of the Indochina Refugee Action Center, George Wagner of the U.S. Catholic Conference, Nan Borton of the International Rescue Committee, and numerous others.

Most of the people we interviewed in the cities we visited are named in the body of this report. Some of them had been interviewed by Tom Barnes in 1977 when he studied the earlier stages of the resettlement while attending the Executive Seminar. Many of these people are still in place, still doing impressive work in an area that has grown in complexity over the past three years.

O V E R V I E W

The global problem of refugees has assumed unprecedented geographic, economic, and political dimensions. The proliferation of new nations since World War II and the attendant international political polarizations have generated civil and armed strife, political oppression, racial persecution, and economic and social upheavals that have uprooted, terrorized, and made homeless hundreds of thousands of people. Most official estimates place the number of refugees in the world today at seven to eight million; some range as high as 13 million. Every continent has been affected by the exodus of refugees from more than 35 countries. Estimates of the number of people fleeing African countries range from two and a half to four million; Palestinian refugees in the Middle East are said to number almost two million, Soviet Jewish and East European refugees 50,000, and refugees from South American countries many thousands. More than a million people have fled from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

The United States has consistently held that rescue, assistance, and resettlement of these refugees are international responsibilities and that this country should do its share in the context of an international effort. The U.S. role in world affairs has dictated that this share be a large one, and refugee programs have become increasingly important elements of U.S. foreign and domestic policy for political as well as humanitarian reasons.

The Evolution of Policies and Programs

The world refugee problem reached its massive proportions in stages, building up from the large migrations of the 1950's and '60's. International responses to the successive emergencies tended to be slow, workable solutions proved elusive, and coordination was neither smooth nor well planned. U.S. programs suffered from the same lack of well defined and coordinated policy guidance. The United States was slow to come to grips with the anachronistic nature of its immigration laws, which impeded implementation of an integrated and efficient refugee admission policy. It was only in 1965 that the Immigration and Nationality Act, the basic law governing immigration to the United States, was amended to provide specifically for the admission of refugees. Successive administrations resorted to piecemeal approaches, extending programs and devising new ones as crisis followed crisis, with resultant anomalies and inefficiencies.

Until the advent of the Refugee Act of 1980, signed into law by President Carter on March 17, 1980, U.S. immigration laws contained only two provisions that could be used for the admission of refugees: the conditional entry provision (the seventh preference category in the immigrant visa preference system) and the provision for parole. The number of people who could be admitted under the conditional entry provision was limited to only 17,400, and to qualify for admission under this provision the refugees had to demonstrate that they had fled from a communist or communist-dominated country or from the Middle East. The ideological and geographic restrictions effectively excluded refugees from such areas as Africa and South America. The numerical quota could hardly begin to accommodate those from Southeast Asia. As a result, U.S. administrations turned increasingly to the parole-authority provision, originally intended only for the Attorney General's use in individual cases to meet extraordinary situations. Sizeable groups of refugees paroled into the United States included:

1956-58	32,000 from Hungary
1962	15,000 from Hong Kong
1970	6,500 from Czechoslovakia
1970-78	28,500 from the USSR & East Europe
1975-78	1,100 from South America, mostly from Chile

The parole authority has also been used to bring in more than half of the roughly 800,000 Cubans now residing in this country, as well as the bulk of the 320,000-odd refugees admitted to the United States from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. All told, the United States has brought in an average of 50,000 refugees a year over the past 34 years--some 1.7 million people.

Policies and programs for domestic resettlement of the refugees have developed piecemeal and through repeated statutory amendments. The result has been an array of separate programs marked by inconsistencies and perceived inequities. For example, the Cuban program from the outset provided extensive support for refugees on a continuing basis; full federal reimbursement of the states for similar support of the Indochinese has had to be renewed on a year-to-year basis, creating uncertainty verging on panic in some state capitals as the end of each fiscal year approached. For refugees other than Cuban and Indochinese, assistance has largely taken the form of grants to voluntary agencies.

Of all the programs, the Indochinese have been the most erratic. They have come into being, with varying funding procedures, to cope with a refugee flow administered under five separate parole actions. Programs ended when the flow seemed to be waning, only to be succeeded by new ones as new emergencies arose. The stop-start nature of these programs produced wasteful administrative disruptions. Thus an Interagency Task Force established in May 1975 to deal with the Indochinese refugee problem ceased operations in December 1975 only to be resurrected in 1976. State and local government bodies have been unable to coordinate and budget effectively for community services to the refugees, and chronic uncertainties have created problems for the voluntary agencies (VOLAGs) with which the State Department contracts for refugee reception and resettlement.

The New Legislation

Critics have pointed out that legislation to revamp the archaic immigration laws was proposed as early as the mid-1960's but was derailed by opposition from conservative Congressional leaders who held committee chairmanships. It was the 1977-79 Indochinese refugee crisis, which stirred American humanitarian impulses and threatened political stability in Southeast Asia, that finally got the necessary momentum going behind moves for more flexible legislation attuned to the times. A combined Executive-Congressional drive to overhaul the immigration laws culminated in the signing into law last month of the nation's first comprehensive policy for the admission and resettlement of refugees. The Refugee Act of 1980 contains these salient provisions:

+ It adopts the United Nations' definition of a refugee as "someone outside his or her country who is unable or unwilling to return to that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion"--superseding the narrow geographic and ideological criteria built into the 1965 legislation.

+ It raises the annual ceiling on "normal flow" admission of refugees from 17,400 to a more realistic 50,000. It also allows the President, in consultation with the Congress, to set admission quotas beyond the "normal flow" for refugee groups of special concern to the United States.

+ It reduces from two years to one year the period refugees must reside in the United States to qualify for Permanent Resident Alien status.

+ It authorizes Federal Government reimbursement of state and local governments for 100% of the costs of assisting refugees for three years after each refugee's arrival. The three-year limit will go into effect after an 18-month transition period.

Two important organizational actions preceded the coming into law of the Act. The first was the creation in 1979, by Executive Order, of the office of Ambassador at Large and U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs in the Department of State. This action reflected recognition that refugee problems span international and domestic policies and involve numerous federal, state, and local government departments and agencies, voluntary agencies both in the United States and abroad, and international organizations and foreign governments. The U.S. Coordinator's responsibilities include leading and orchestrating government-wide activities and ensuring that the United States works effectively in a collective and equitable international effort.

The other development was the formation in 1978 of the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy, charged with a study looking toward the establishment of a worldwide immigration ceiling. The Commission is also charged, among other things, with devising ways to facilitate adjustment of the status of certain of the refugees paroled into the United States, with re-codifying U.S. immigration laws, and with recommending overall immigration policy for the remainder of this century. Its report is due in 1981. Meanwhile, committees in both Houses of Congress are considering various legislative reforms, including enactment of an "immigration efficiency act" relating to Immigration and Naturalization Service operations.

The Indochinese

There have been two major waves of refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos: (1) the Vietnamese who left in 1975-76 after the fall of Saigon, and (2) the Vietnamese and ethnic Chinese from Vietnam, Hmong hill tribesmen from Laos, lowlanders from Laos, and Cambodians who have been part of the continuing mass exodus of "boat people" and land-route refugees reaching neighboring countries of first asylum. The first wave consisted chiefly of people with relatively high educational and occupational credentials. They included former South Vietnamese Government officials, former employees of the U.S. Government, businessmen, merchants, and professionals. The later wave has consisted for the most part of peasants and fishermen with little or no education. The Hmong tribesmen do not have a written language; some of the men but few of the women are literate in Laotian.

Some 150,000 Cambodian refugees have moved to North Vietnam, and an estimated 250,000 refugees from Vietnam--mostly ethnic Chinese--are in the People's Republic of China. Another 350,000 Indochinese refugees are in countries of first asylum in Southeast Asia. The 320,000 in the United States represent about 85% of the refugees who have found homes in noncommunist countries. They have gravitated in the largest numbers to California, which had just under 100,000 as of February 1980. Texas had some 29,000 in February, Pennsylvania and Washington 12,000 each, Illinois 10,000, Louisiana 9,000, Virginia and Oregon 8,500 each, and New York and Minnesota 8,300 each. There are smaller numbers in each of the other states.

The first-wave Vietnamese were brought into the United States with remarkable speed: some 135,000 were admitted and resettled in eight months, and the total stood at about 160,000 as of March 1977. The continuing admission of the subsequent groups has responded to the life-or-death urgency of the refugees' plight. The United States has been bringing in 14,000 a month since mid-1979 when President Carter doubled the admission quota. First preference is given to people with special ties to the United States through family or past employment. As of March 1980, Indochinese refugee groups in this country were believed to total some 235,000 Vietnamese, including ethnic Chinese, 35,000 Laotians, 30,000 Hmong, and 20,000 Cambodians.

Domestic Resettlement

A variety of factors contributes to the disarray in the domestic resettlement process. The states--and in some cases counties in the same state--follow differing procedures and philosophies in administering public services. HEW's Indochinese Refugee Assistance Program (IRAP), which waives certain procedures and ground rules applicable to recipients of public assistance in regular programs, has no single comprehensive manual for case workers. They operate on the basis of cumulative ad hoc instructions, and they search for precedents much as lawyers do. There is no clearly articulated philosophy on how best to help refugees achieve self-sufficiency. This issue revolves around early placement in jobs, almost any jobs, versus longer term training requiring longer public assistance. Nor are there clear central guidelines on priorities in the allocation of government grants for projects relating to refugee resettlement.

The voluntary agencies have only the broadest guidelines on how to spend the $500 they get from the State Department for each refugee they receive and resettle. The Department is now working with the VOLAGs to introduce greater precision into the contracts. Initial orientation has been a major problem for the VOLAGs as increasing numbers of refugees arrive with no understanding of American culture, no English, and a great deal of misinformation

picked up during long waits in the camps. Some refugees with guarantees of eventual resettlement are now being transferred to new processing centers in Indonesia and the Philippines where they will have access to training and orientation while awaiting admission.

A pervasive problem is lack of the kinds of data that are needed for planning. There is no way to track, let alone control, the constant secondary migrations of refugees--moves away from the areas where they were originally resettled. They move in search of better jobs, better living conditions, more congenial climates, higher welfare payments, or greater concentrations of friends and relatives. Their agglomeration in places like Orange County, California, has created "impaction" with attendant strains on community resources, and impaction can overtake a community without forewarning. State Department planners are now studying possible ways to encourage the formation of new "magnet" communities in areas that may be willing to accept refugees.

Public Opinion

The American public has traditionally been ambivalent toward admission of the displaced and the persecuted, with compassion tempered by the perceived dictates of enlightened self-interest. U.S. resources can hardly be stretched to accommodate all of the world's homeless. Some opponents of liberalized admission quotas have argued that the United States might create a vicious circle by opening its doors to larger numbers of refugees: the knowledge that the doors are open wider could encourage more people to leave their homelands, thereby exacerbating rather than alleviating the refugee problem.

State and local governments have been relatively sanguine about admission of the Indochinese as long as the Federal Government has been paying the costs under IRAP. They are less sanguine now, with full federal reimbursement of the states for monies spent under IRAP to be cut off for each refugee after three years under the terms of the new Refugee Act. State and local governments are responsive to their tax-paying constituencies and to pressures from low-income groups who believe the refugees are preempting jobs and housing. A Gallup Poll in May 1975 showed 54% of respondents opposed to admitting Vietnamese refugees. Four nationwide polls taken in the summer and fall of 1979 showed 57 to 71%--depending on how the questions were framed--opposed to increasing the admission quotas. The responses spanned all income groups, and the reasons for the negative replies were largely economic.

Balance Sheet

Public opinion polls, politicking, and inevitable community frictions notwithstanding, the resettlement of more than 300,000 Indochinese in this country has been a remarkable accomplishment. From the outset, thousands of Americans have contributed time and energy to the resettlement effort simply because they have considered it the right thing to do. Indochinese community leaders have helped--people like General Vang Pao, who leads the disciplined Hmong. There are phenomena like the large community of Hmong in Missoula, Montana, and "little Saigon" in Arlington, Virginia. No community is without its problems, but there have been some notable successes.

Where conflicts have arisen as the result of hostility toward the Indochinese, they have tended to be most serious in big cities with large minority populations. Outbreaks of violence, for example, have involved Indochinese and other low-income minority groups in Denver, New Orleans, and Philadelphia. As of February 1980, 19 serious problem areas had been called to the attention of the Justice Department's Community Relations Service (CRS).

Large cities have not been the only trouble spots. CRS was called in to help deal with the recent debacle on the Gulf Coast of Texas, which has drawn prominent play in the national media. An engineer from Baltimore with an interest in a retail fish business brought 124 Vietnamese into Seadrift, a marginal-economy fishing community of 850 to 1,000 people, in the summer of 1979. The Vietnamese ran afoul of local fishing customs and

taboos of which they were unaware, and a white fisherman was shot by a Vietnamese during an altercation on a boat. Tensions built up and persisted as the Vietnamese population expanded and moved farther up the coast. Rumors spread among the whites that the Vietnamese were getting extraordinary benefits (one story had it that each family was given $5,000). The whites believed the Vietnamese were Viet Cong, and the Vietnamese believed the whites were out to exterminate them. CRS tried to help disentangle the crossed communications by enlisting the cooperation of the newspaper editor in Seadrift and urging the Texas Wildlife Service to get its fishing regulations translated into Vietnamese. But the situation heated up again this February when the sister of the slain fisherman was found dead in unexplained circumstances. The Ku Klux Klan moved in to exploit the tensions, media people swarmed over the area, and interfering "feds" were accused of fanning the flames.

But Seadrift may have found a silver lining: someone had the innovative idea of adding shrimp fishing to the traditional crabbing as a way of accommodating the enlarged fishing population along the Gulf Coast while strengthening the economic base of the area.

Seadrift is unique--and so in one way or another is every community. The profiles on the following pages examine the atmosphere, attitudes, and approaches in five communities in the West, Midwest, and Southwest. They are all different, but they all have common threads.

COMMUNITY PROFILES

ALBUQUERQUE

"I don't know who is in charge of helping the refugees here."
--Nguyen Trung Giem
President, Vietnamese Association

No single group or person is in charge. Many of the same people who started working with the Indochinese refugees in 1975 are putting in long hours to sustain an effort that has developed in New Mexico in fits and starts, with less than enthusiastic involvement at state and local government levels. Those concerned in the resettlement effort are in touch with each other and, where resources permit, are mutually supportive. They take pride in their accomplishments against what they see as formidable odds. Uniformly, they express frustration over insufficient staff, spartan funding, and an attitude on the part of local government officials and the community at large which they variously describe as "aloof," "uninterested," and "indifferent."

Government and Community Attitudes

The local government's lack of active involvement becomes understandable in the perspective of Albuquerque's ethnic profile. Calculations based on the 1970 census count Hispanics as 35 to 37% of the population, a figure expected to rise sharply as a result of the 1980 census. American Indians living inside the city constitute some 5%, Blacks 3%, and Asians less than one-half of one percent. The city government keeps no central statistics on the refugees. It has perceived no need to do so. The resettlement people believe some 1,400 Indochinese are in Albuquerque.

Paul Cruz, Executive Director of Mayor Rusk's Human Rights Board, commented that the community "has to recognize a social problem before it can do something about it." No special problems relating to Asians in general or to the Indochinese in particular have come to the Mayor's attention. Mr. Cruz said Mayor Rusk is a strong believer in equal opportunity and would be receptive to an appeal for support were a valid need to be defined. As the result of a recent call from the refugee resettlement director for Catholic Social Services, Mr. Cruz has designated the city's Director for Human Services as the focal point for contacts relating to Asians. The city, he said, is seeking to develop new services that will meet the needs of all residents of Albuquerque and is prepared to respond to special needs if and when they surface.

Such assurances notwithstanding, those directly involved in the resettlement speak of a lack of commitment on the city's part and have grounds for discerning a low level of community interest. Vicente Ximenes, a leader of the large Hispanic community, unequivocally describes the attitude of the city's Chicanos as "negative." There are, he said, many individual exceptions. There is recognition of the humanitarian motive. But the Chicanos have waged a long, uphill battle for acceptance as first-class citizens and feel that they have "almost made it"; how, then, can they be expected to look kindly on favored treatment of a new ethnic minority in a situation where housing is tight and jobs are hard to find? As for the argument that the United States bears a special responsibility for the Indochinese, Mr. Ximenes said the Chicanos believe those responsible for the problem should bear the burden of coping with it.

In a similar vein, Paul Cruz commented that "if the Federal Government is going to keep sending refugees into Albuquerque, it should send a little money with them--at least a sharing arrangement." Housing and jobs are at a premium. Mr. Cruz believes it is unfair to the refugees to send them to an area where there is no substantial community of their compatriots and where multiple problems already exist.

Local media publicity for refugee resettlement and relief has been sparse. The Reverend Gary Weaver of the First United Presbyterian Church was heartened by a large turnout at a Cambodian relief rally last fall but said it has been very difficult generating media coverage to keep the effort alive. Reverend Weaver, whose church has sponsored a few refugee families, has found "mixed feelings" about the Indochinese in the community--resentment in some quarters but no real hostility. Volatile racial antagonism between Hispanic and Black students at one of the high schools has not, to his knowledge, extended to the Indochinese.

Local press coverage, however, has tended to focus on accounts of occasional incidents involving Indochinese. Charley Ramirez, Jr., who manages the city's public housing project, believes the media improperly blew up a squabble between Vietnamese and other teenagers into a big racial conflict. It was, he said, "the kind of thing that could happen anywhere," but the publicity caused the Vietnamese family to move out of the area.

The Pattern of Resettlement

Statistics on the flow of refugees into and out of Albuquerque are hard to come by. A record of the in-flow has been compiled by Bobbie L. Nobles, who was Assistant Staff Director of the now defunct New Mexico Indochina Refugee Resettlement Program (NMIRRP) during a brief period when the state directly sponsored some 500 refugees. In an unpublished paper prepared at the University of New Mexico in May 1978, Mr. Nobles identifies four distinct groups of refugees who entered New Mexico after the fall of Saigon in April 1975:

- The first group, arriving between April and December 1975, consisted largely of Vietnamese city dwellers who had served in government or in the military in South Vietnam, owned businesses, or pursued trades. Most adults had high school educations. A few tried unsuccessfully to cope with the isolation of New Mexico farm life. Most found jobs in Albuquerque and settled there.

- A second group, resettled between October and December 1975, came in under the NMIRRP, which began operations on October 8. These were hard-to-settle families of Vietnamese fishermen with little or no education, transferred from Camp Pendleton, California. The Governor's guidelines were: resettle the refugees but don't take jobs away from Americans and hold the expenditure of welfare funds to a minimum. Resettlement met with mixed success.

- A third group consisted of 175 Lao Hmong and Cambodians who came in under an Expanded Parole Program between July and December 1976. The majority settled in Albuquerque, most of them under the NMIRRP. Most heads of household had worked for U.S. agencies or businesses in their home countries. The educational level was low, but most of the Hmong men could speak, read, and write Laotian. Job placement was generally successful.

- A fourth wave began early in 1977 and built up in 1978 as Vietnamese boat people and Lao, Lao Hmong and Cambodian families from camps in Thailand moved into Albuquerque, many of them to join relatives.

While Bobbie Nobles records many successes in early job placement and progress toward self-sufficiency, he notes that the refugee population in the state had declined from a high of some 1,300 to only 500 by May 1978. The eventual low point in Albuquerque was estimated at 450. The refugees left in search of higher welfare payments, milder climates, fresh fish, and friends or relatives. California, Texas, and Louisiana are believed to have drawn the largest numbers. Most of the Hmong migrated to Montana, Texas, and Colorado. Some of the refugees returned to New Mexico, having found that the grass elsewhere wasn't greener after all.

More might have stayed on had the NMIRRP remained in business and provided the focus for a more coordinated resettlement effort, but Bobbie Nobles and others say the state "was never really in the effort": it was spending federal money. Troublesome bureaucratic problems and political pressures developed. Concerned citizens wrote to HEW and to their Congressmen protesting that the refugees were poorly served by immediate placement in menial jobs with minimal public assistance. The state, in Bobbie Nobles' view, was chary of getting bogged down in that controversy.

Larger numbers of refugees have been arriving in Albuquerque since the admission quota was raised in the summer of 1979. The present estimated total of 1,400 in the city and its environs already exceeds the state total at its highest point during the earlier migrations. Close to 150 a month are coming in. Ninety percent are from Laos. Most are farmers. Most are illiterate. A larger proportion of this group than of previous ones is expected to stay in Albuquerque, having no farm friends or relatives elsewhere to join.

The people involved in the newly expanded resettlement effort share the view that early job placement speeds acculturation and mastery of English. Older hands are convinced that the departures of refugees from Albuquerque, for the various reasons cited above, in no way vitiate the validity of this basic strategy. The only caveat is that too much may have been sought too fast in the earlier periods.

Reception of New Arrivals

The Tolstoy Foundation--with main branches in Salt Lake City, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Albuquerque--is now the largest resettlement agency in the city, bringing in 100 to 110 people a month. The Foundation's new resettlement director, 22-year-old Debbey Spak, brings to her job a degree in business administration and a large reserve of energy. She has three assistants and shares with Mel McCutchan of the National Alliance of Businessmen (NAB), who occupies an adjacent office, the services of a Vietnamese staffer filling a CETA slot.

Catholic Social Services, the local agency of the U.S. Catholic Conference, handles most of the rest of the refugees. It is now receiving one or two families a week, averaging three to six people per family. Resettlement Director Ted Benevides, a five-year veteran of the program, has told his headquarters he can take no more than three families a week. He has a staff of three interpreters. Church congregations and private citizens have sponsored some refugee families in Albuquerque, but the VOLAGs are bringing in most of the new arrivals without the help of individual sponsors.

A word about "interpreters": they are much more than linguistic intermediaries. They are not necessarily bilingual in the usual sense; they may be fluent in an Indochinese language but far from native in English. In the words of Ted Benevides, "they do everything." With the resettlement directors, they meet the refugees at the airport, sometimes on less than 24 hours' notice, sometimes in the middle of the night. It is the interpreters who explain the mysteries of American living (how to use a gas range and a toilet), take the refugees grocery shopping, put them on food stamps, help them apply for Medicaid, shepherd them through the procedures of applying for Social Security cards and cash assistance, and get the children registered in school. The interpreter's job does not end there. The refugees often have no one else to turn to when problems arise, and the Lao farmers will have larger problems for longer periods than many of their predecessors. The interpreters

also play a key role in clearing up misunderstandings, which are legion. Some of the refugees heard in the camps that they would each receive $500 upon arrival and wonder why they are given only $15 pocket money. Ms. Spak says they come with "no orientation, no preparation"--and no English.

Ms. Spak and Mr. Benevides are allotted an average of $200 per refugee by their national headquarters, which set levels for each city based on the cost of living. Both resettlement directors say $200 is hardly enough. Security deposits and the first month's rent on apartments, as well as basic needs for food, clothing, and furnishings are expected to come out of this allotment. With welfare cases now backed up because of the accelerated influx, it can take as much as three months before a refugee family actually sees cash assistance. Meanwhile the family must eat and the rent must be paid. The resettlement directors say the national VOLAGs make site visits and are aware of how the money is spent. It goes to meet the most urgent immediate needs.

Welfare

Marion Morrison, working on refugee cases at the southeast Abuquerque office of the Income Support Division, New Mexico Department of Human Services, confirms that the welfare machinery is overloaded. Her office now has two people working virtually fulltime on refugee cases and may need a third. She said some 200 families, averaging six people per family, were receiving cash assistance in March 1980. The total is expected to rise.

Ms. Morrison describes IRAP as "a special program without a special organization." The waiving of rules applicable in regular programs has created situations for which no precedents exist: "It has been a process of trial and error." She points to a number of anomalies. For example, case workers are instructed to move refugees into regular programs as soon as possible, yet the refugees cannot produce the kinds of documentation required of regular applicants. In establishing family relationships, the case worker relies on oral identification by the interpreter.

Ms. Morrison says "welfare" seems to denote stability to many refugees: the grapevine tells them they can rely on welfare if they can't get jobs or are laid off. She believes there has been some abuse of the system by refugees, "but not nearly as much as among regular welfare recipients. The interpreters deserve much of the credit."

Employment

Mel McCutchan, deeply involved in the resettlement effort since 1975, continues to be a prime mover in finding jobs for Albuquerque's refugees. Sandia Corporation donates his time to the National Alliance of Businessmen, an organization financed chiefly by the Department of Labor. NAB works through the Department to develop job placements in an effective partnership between government and the private sector. Mr. McCutchan reports his job placements each quarter to the NAB national office, which reports to DOL.

McCutchan works with the Private Industry Council in locating jobs for the refugees. He has placed them with Levi Strauss, where some have risen from entry-level jobs paying $3.50 an hour to jobs paying twice that amount. Others have been placed with small electronics firms, with jewellers, in hospitals and restaurants, and in the commissary at Kirtland Air Force Base. McCutchan says "I can confidently reflect local business" in expressing a favorable attitude among employers toward hiring refugees. "It's easier to put a refugee to work than any other disadvantaged person." The great majority want to work and will take any job. They will accept tedious jobs and will make yeoman efforts to get around transportation problems.

Paradoxically, Mel McCutchan's successes have led to frictions and have run into bureaucratic roadblocks. He reports having placed 300 to 400 refugees in jobs annually, but he says the NAB can no longer be used to put Albuquerque's refugees to work within the CETA structure without violating the Labor Department's design for job placement proportional to population groups. He exceeded the quota for Asians by 300% in one two-month period and could easily go higher. He said there were repercussions from CETA and a visiting

HEW official told him he should be putting more refugees on welfare. He hopes to alleviate these frustrations through an HEW grant that would enable him to develop job placements through a different system. He has had one such proposal rejected but plans to try again.

Are there in fact enough jobs for the refugees in Albuquerque? To cite the 8.5% unemployment rate and let it go at that would be an oversimplification. McCutchan and Ted Benevides say there have been complaints about refugees preempting jobs, but the complainants often turn down the same or similar jobs because of low pay, lack of status, tedium, or inconvenience. Rudolph Otero, Employment Service Director for the New Mexico Employment Security Department, commented that the city is growing fast, the construction industry should pick up by summer, and "there ought to be plenty of jobs." Paul Cruz of the Human Rights Board, while citing the high unemployment rate, noted that five or six large construction firms are moving into Albuquerque--attracted, among other things, by cheap labor. Several thousand jobs should open up. Some of these may be taken by undocumented aliens, but Mr. Cruz believes there should be many base-level jobs that could be filled by refugees without skills or English--jobs a Hispanic with a year or two of college education would turn down. Ted Benevides said: "Albuquerque is growing, and there isn't enough time for us to reject anyone."

Housing

There are differing views on housing. Some call it "adequate," while others focus on the competition for low-cost units. Manuel Cordova of the Public Housing Authority cites family size as the biggest problem in housing the refugees; a family of 13 needs two units. The refugees are dispersed throughout the sprawling city, most of them in low-income neighborhoods in the southeastern section.

There is a waiting list of more than 300 for units in the Mountain View apartment complex, New Mexico's largest public housing project. Mountain View has 558 units occupied by 278 Hispanic, 103 Anglo, 80 Black, 60 Asian, and 37 American Indian households. Project Manager Charley Ramirez has increased the Asian occupancy from 14 during his two years on the job but is holding the line now to sustain an ethnic balance. The units run from $167 a month for one bedroom to $280 for three, utilities not included. All the units are unfurnished. Ramirez says the average Indochinese family numbers six people, sometimes with one parent, and requires a three-bedroom unit. Those who leave tend to go within a month or two, usually to move out of New Mexico. The rest stay a year or more.

The resettlement people say many Albuquerque landlords do not want the refugees. Electric ranges are broken, plumbing gets clogged, formica surfaces are destroyed by meat cleavers--"all kinds of problems." Longer, fuller orientations would help. The VOLAGs do the best they can. Ted Benevides has made use of an orientation film developed by Mrs. Lieu Rupp, director of an HEW-funded mental health project with offices in the same building as Catholic Social Services; Debbey Spak of Tolstoy learned about the film during this interviewer's visit.

Health

Lieu Rupp hopes to make more films and to foster some common efforts. She held a workshop for people concerned with the refugees last year and plans to hold more. With three assistants, including one Lao and one Vietnamese, she offers counseling and orientation services and can provide some translator and interpreter support. The refugees come, she says, with unrealistically high expectations. Family problems arise, and people on welfare become bored. Mrs. Rupp tries to help the refugees over the hurdles of adjustment to an alien culture.

Both physical and mental health are in the province of Dr. Angeline Dao, who directs an HEW-funded American Asian Human Services Project and works with refugees at the local hospital and clinic. Dr. Dao cites widespread health problems among the refugees coming in from camps--TB, parasites, lice. Her project is focused on family planning, which she sees as a critical need for refugee families. Others in the resettlement community believe her HEW grant is the largest for any single refugee project in Albuquerque.

Education and ESL

Mr. Nguyen Trung Giem, who heads the city's Vietnamese Association, says without hesitation that "English is the biggest problem." A former military officer who settled in Albuquerque with the first wave of refugees, he holds down an assembly-line job in an electronics firm, is buying his home, and is teaching himself English but still has difficulty communicating. He has appealed in behalf of his association for special English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for Indochinese adults, so far without result. Mr. Khampane Douangpanya, a teacher at Albuquerque High School, agrees that the adult ESL programs available at the city's Technical-Vocational Institute (T-VI) do not fully meet the needs of the refugees and is trying to persuade T-VI to set up special classes.

Susan Haase, who coordinates a pilot HEW-funded bilingual/multicultural program at Albuquerque High School, strongly agrees that the refugees need more and better adult ESL training. She said a proposal had been drawn up for federal funding ($60,000) of a pilot ESL and on-the-job training program which would have included training for employers. A number of local firms were ready to participate. The proposal was turned down, Ms. Haase said, because the number of people it would have served--150--was considered insignificant.

The 300-odd Southeast Asian students in the city's public schools fare better. A state-funded program for bilingual/multicultural education serves the entire Albuquerque School District. Ms. Haase's Title VII program, wholly supported by federal funds, is the only one of its kind in the city's high schools but has a counterpart at a middle school that feeds into the high school. These programs seek to combine language learning with acculturation. The strategy is to "mainstream" students into substantive classes with their own age groups, providing supplementary ESL as necessary for non-English speakers and--in the Title VII program--teaching students in their own language in substantive areas to maintain conceptual development until they can function in English.

These programs are targeted at Spanish-speaking students but can accommodate the Indochinese. While Ms. Haase has Title VII money for the purchase only of Spanish-language teaching aids, she has obtained some materials on her own that are useful for the Indochinese. The ESL component of the Title VII program at the high school has one teacher with a Spanish background and one Lao--Mr. Douangpanya--who speaks French, Lao, Thai, and Vietnamese. Both work with all non-English-speaking students.

Manual Romero, who heads the state-sponsored Bilingual Center, says it takes Indochinese children an average of 14 months to master English. He emphasizes that this is an average. Some of the Vietnamese have made stellar progress. But Ms. Haase comments that students from the Lao farm families "are, to put it bluntly, in a mess. They are illiterate, and the teachers don't know how to cope." She sees a special need for teacher training. Mr. Douangpanya encourages all his Asian students to get part-time jobs because he has found that they learn English much faster.

Ms. Haase feels strongly that community education is needed. She ascribes a general attitude of indifference--"almost a non-attitude"--chiefly to lack of information: "It's easier to ignore something you don't understand than to try to deal with it." She has high praise for the "unbelievable dedication" shown by the small group of people responsible for the refugee resettlement.

SAN DIEGO

"There's a high degree of sensitivity here that has made things work."
--Dave Reinhardt, Catholic Community Services

"Our problem is growing pains. We could become another Orange County."
--Harold Kosakoff, Interjurisdictional Task Force on Indochinese Refugees

"Impact" is relative and perceptual. Orange County is cited as the prototypical heavily impacted area in the heavily impacted state of California. With an active Refugee Coalition of community organizations concerned in the resettlement, San Diego's left and right hands have been working together since 1975 to absorb the third largest number of Indochinese refugees in the state, after Los Angeles and Orange Counties. They have had their problems as the numbers have grown, but most people in Washington don't think of San Diego when "impact" is mentioned.

"Provisional estimates" developed by the Population Research Unit in Sacramento placed the number of Indochinese in San Diego County at 10,318 as of the end of 1979, up from 5,905 at the beginning of the year. Estimates by those on the scene today range from 12,000 to 18,000. "More than 15,000" is the usual figure.

Based on adjusted 1970 census data, the county population is estimated to be 15% Chicano (many believe 22% is more accurate), 7% Black, and 2% Asian. Refugees make up half of the Asian population. Some 800,000 of the county's 1.8 million people live in San Diego city proper. The area of major refugee concentration is the low-income, heavily Chicano Linda Vista section of the city, where refugees now make up about a fourth of a population of 25,000. The recently formed Interjurisdictional Task Force on Indochinese Refugees estimates that 500 to 600 refugees a month are now entering the county--double the rate as of June 1979.

The View from the County Administration

In San Diego the county is the major governmental provider of services. Expressions of concern by the county administration have played to the large constituency of well-heeled property owners in the city of San Diego and its environs. In news releases last September and October, the office of the Supervisor for the affluent Third District emphasized that "local property tax dollars should not be used for what is an issue of national policy--the resettlement of Indochinese refugees."

With the cost of refugee resettlement in the county believed to be running in excess of $4.5 million annually, resource managers are apprehensive over the prospect of a cut-back in federal revenue sharing and the imposition of the three-year limit on federal reimbursement of the states for monies spent under IRAP. "We've been in a good position with the Federal Government picking up the bills," according to Harold Kosakoff, who coordinates the work of the Interjurisdictional Task Force. "But if they stop, what happens then?" The county government argues that public assistance costs should be "shared equitably on a nationwide basis through the federal income tax." And in the California context, Kosakoff points out that the flow of refugees into San Diego "is about four times our fair share."

San Diego's resource managers face further uncertainties over what will happen "when" Proposition 9--the Jarvis II initiative, known as "Jaws II"--passes in November. Jarvis II would cut California personal income taxes in half for all income groups. The full effects of its precursor, Proposition 13, have yet to be felt, with the state still coasting on surplus funds through annual bail-out bills. The crunch will start to come in 1981-82.

The County Board approved the formation of the Interjurisdictional Task Force late last year in response to an initiative by Supervisor Jim Bates, in whose Fourth District the refugee-impacted Linda Vista community is located. Chaired by County Assistant

Administrative Officer Randall Bacon, it brings together representatives of county, state, and city departments and agencies. Community groups and organizations, many of them funded through government contracts, are represented by the chairman of the Refugee Coalition.

Fact-finding is the first order of business. Task Force coordinator Kosakoff comments that the county is not fully tuned in on state and federal activities; statistics on funds spent for the refugees are not broken out by the Department of Human Services, which administers all revenue-sharing funds that flow into San Diego County. Kosakoff believes that as much as 10-15% of the monies spent on low-income groups may now go into support for the refugees. He hopes to pin down the figures in the first comprehensive study of the impact of refugee resettlement in the areas of health, housing, employment, education, transportation, and social services in the county.

The Task Force held a public hearing in February, attended by a large number of Indochinese as well as by representatives of community groups and private citizens. It has issued regular status reports. Kosakoff hopes to have his study completed this spring and inclines toward proposing that a private, non-service-providing group be organized to build statistics on a continuing basis, do evaluations, and help consolidate services.

Community Organizations

The Refugee Coalition, currently chaired by Cindy Jensen of the International Rescue Committee, is skeptical about the ability of the Task Force to help in any tangible way. Initially excluded from the Task Force, the Coalition people feel they should have been included from the outset: they are the ones in the trenches who know what is really going on. At the same time, they see value in the opportunity to better educate county officials about their problems, and Ms. Jensen is a regular participant in Task Force discussions. Ms. Jensen and her alternate, Janlee Wong, who directs an Indochinese Community Health and Education Project, both attended and contributed to a Task Force meeting observed by this writer. State and city representatives failed to show up.

During the same week, some 35 people attended a session of the Coalition, which meets every third Wednesday at a community center in the Linda Vista area. The Coalition started in 1975 with four or five members. It now serves as a forum for communication among more than 20 public and private organizations concerned with refugee reception and resettlement. Some of the Indochinese mutual assistance associations (MAAs) are represented.

There are more than a dozen MAAs in San Diego. The long established Cambodian Association is seen as especially effective. The Hmong are highly disciplined but lack the sophistication to get what they need. Other groups are fragmented. There are at least nine Vietnamese associations, representing such subgroups as military veterans, air force veterans, students, Catholics, and Buddhists. The Lao Friendship Association and the Lao Association appear on one list of MAAs, but only the Friendship Association is on the Coalition's rolls. A Lao Family Association is now seeking membership in the Coalition.

The general view is that the MAAs could wield considerable clout if they could only get together. The Task Force has a letter from the chairman of a newly formed Council of Indochinese Organizations of San Diego, described as "the unified representative body for 16 Indochinese associations and agencies in San Diego," but at this stage "unified" is at best a premature descriptor.

Coordination is no easy matter with so many governmental and community entities involved and so many special interests at stake. While no one is in charge in Albuquerque, San Diego has too many chiefs.

The Refugee Population

The "more than 15,000" refugees in San Diego County are believed to be 60-80% Vietnamese. Including the Hmong, there are more Lao than Cambodians. Mr. Vu Ker, spokesman for the well organized Hmong, counts his community as numbering about 200 families with 1,500 people, 500 of them adults. Most of the new arrivals are joining relatives, according to the resettlement directors of the VOLAGs handling the largest numbers. Most are from rural backgrounds, with little or no education and few if any transferrable skills. Few speak any English.

San Diego's refugee population is mobile. The attraction of an idyllic climate is offset by relatively low wages. Out-migration is encouraged by the lure of higher pay in Orange County, Los Angeles, and Santa Clara. No one knows what effect secondary migrations are having on the totals. Dave Reinhardt of Catholic Community Services, who keeps tabs on the refugees his agency brings in, does not count secondary migrations in his totals because in his experience they average one in for each one out. But secondary migrations could affect the proportions of the ethnic subgroups. For example, many refugees have been moving to San Diego from Albuquerque, where the population now is heavily Lao.

The VOLAGs

The U.S. Catholic Conference (USCC) carries the largest resettlement load in San Diego through Catholic Community Services (CCS), the International Rescue Committee (IRC) the second largest. Other VOLAGs include the Lutheran agency, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, just getting started in Indochinese resettlement, and World Relief, which is resuming these activities.

The CCS Refugee Resettlement Office is housed in the same building with the USCC-operated Project ACCESS, which handles career development for refugees with funding from HEW, CETA, and the state of California. Some staffing is shared to make best use of linguistic talent. Exclusive of three managers, the USCC has a total staff of 20 people, 10 paid with CETA funds. Counselors and case workers include Vietnamese, Lao, Lao Hmong, and Cambodian. Dave Reinhardt, who is Associate Director of the Resettlement Office, is geared up now to handle 300 refugees a month. He received 275 in January, 258 in February. He spends an average of $218 to $235 per refugee--as much as $450 for a single person and an average of $170 for each member of a family of 10.

While he strongly supports early job placement for refugees, Reinhardt says that unlike the IRC he is now signing up refugees for cash assistance upon arrival unless specific jobs have been identified. It takes up to eight weeks to get cash assistance. With the large numbers now coming in, he can't count on finding jobs by the time his own funding for the new arrivals runs out. If a job is found, he cancels the welfare.

Cindy Jensen, resettlement director for the IRC office, has a staff of 12 with capability in Vietnamese, Lao, and Hmong as well as Chinese; she needs someone with Cambodian. Her office handles an average of 150 arrivals monthly and spends an average of $375 per refugee--more for single people. She, too, is a firm believer in finding jobs for the refugees as soon as possible.

Jobs, Training, and Welfare

There is no argument in San Diego over self-sufficiency as the goal of refugee resettlement or over a general definition of self-sufficiency as the ability to earn enough to obviate the need for dependence on public or private support. The differences are over how to get there.

Kathy Do, director of the state-supported Indochinese Service Center, argued at the February public hearing of the Interjurisdictional Task Force that it makes no sense to treat all refugees as a homogeneous group and place them, willy nilly, in jobs at or near

the minimum wage. She noted that first-wave refugees with professional backgrounds are still working at menial jobs, in some cases still needing cash assistance to support large families. She believes that spending the money to retrain them in professional skills, which the community sorely needs, would pay off for everyone. Dave Reinhardt says San Diego has only one Vietnamese private physician; there is no place in the city to do a residency. At the other end of the spectrum, Ms. Do points out, refugees without skills or education inevitably require longer training to equip them to earn a living. She favors assessment of the needs of each refugee subgroup as the basis for strategies to help them achieve permanent self-sufficiency.

The Task Force is gathering information on eight programs in the county that are available to the refugees for job placement and related training, some serving Indochinese alone and others designed for all low-income groups. They include federal, state, and county programs. Some training programs require that participants be on cash assistance to qualify. The Indochinese Orientation and Employment Program (IOEP), the largest of the programs serving refugees, is one that does not. With state and HEW funding, it furnishes job-skills training in conjunction with ESL, the latter provided under contract by San Diego County Community Colleges.

Mike Campbell, long associated with the IOEP, says many Indochinese believe they are forced off welfare too soon. They think the county should do a better job helping them plan long-range training that will get them permanently off welfare. Campbell believes that forced acculturation and mastery of English through immediate total immersion on the job might work in an area with only a small number of refugees but that it couldn't work en masse in a situation like San Diego's.

Campbell says the IOEP finds jobs for 100% of the people who complete its program (100 of 650 trainees dropped out during a recent month for a variety of reasons, including transportation and child care problems). VOLAGs enroll refugees in fulltime ESL while they are on the IOEP's waiting list. The IOEP runs three-week classes and is instituting a 10-week program. The average trainee has no English. It takes up to eight months for an illiterate refugee adult to master survival-level English.

The demand occupation is electronics assembly. The city's clean-air standard for new industry has encouraged the opening of small electronic component manufacturing plants which lend themselves well to the refugee employment programs. Work processes are repetitive and require meticulous attention to detail but little English. Working conditions are pleasant, and the Indochinese workers generally stay in place, in keeping with a tradition of "marrying" their jobs for life. The USCC-operated Project ACCESS, which primarily counsels and refers refugees elsewhere for actual training, tries to orient refugees on the American work ethic and the concept of upward mobility. Reinhardt believes "there is a job right now for anyone in the community who wants one," but only at or around the minimum wage of $3.10 an hour. That is not enough to eliminate dependence on welfare. There are not enough programs to help refugees upgrade their skills, and the job market gets tighter as the pay level rises.

The number of new recipients of cash assistance rose almost 150% in San Diego after the U.S. quota for Indochinese refugee admissions doubled. The Interjurisdictional Task Force says some 7,600 refugees were on welfare in February 1980, amounting to 2,670 cases; in California a person on Aid To Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) assistance, food stamps, and Medi-Cal counts as one case. But statistics on "welfare" don't tell the whole story: a Catholic Community Services study of how 2,356 refugees fared in 1979 showed 68% on some kind of welfare but less than half that number on full cash assistance.

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Housing

Low-cost housing is considered a bigger problem than jobs for the refugees in San Diego. The crunch is in the city where the jobs are. Farm jobs in rural areas are seasonal and mostly taken by undocumented aliens from Mexico.

As on other matters connected with the refugees, there are few reliable statistics. The Task Force concluded in March that it lacked sufficient information to draw any conclusions on housing. It decided to recommend that the county and city jointly seek federal funds for a study of refugee impact on the low-income housing market, with emphasis on the Linda Vista community.

Everyone agrees, however, that affordable housing of all types for low-income groups is in short supply. There is very little public housing. The City of San Diego Housing Commission reports a waiting list of 2,000 people for rental-assistance certifications and believes that a great many more people may need rental assistance. The Commission is allotted 3,452 certifications. It has considered asking HUD to provide special relief to the refugees, but it fears community resentment.

There is ample evidence of resentment already. Linda Vista landlords are said to like renting to refugees because they don't make trouble (one view is that some of them don't make trouble because "they don't know when they're being ripped off"). There have been complaints about large refugee families crowded into small apartments and about improper maintenance of property by refugees. Competing low-income groups--Anglo, Hispanic, and Black--resent what they see as favoritism toward the refugees. There have been reports of Indochinese being beaten, verbally assaulted, and robbed.

Yet Dave Reinhardt believes that "the Indochinese are probably the best thing that's ever happened to Linda Vista. They may not maintain their houses as we do, but they have brought a respect for law and order and a sense of dignity. Linda Vista used to be shunned as a crime-ridden jungle. Now new businesses are moving in." Reinhardt sees a need for community education--a motion seconded by Bonnie Yamamoto of the Union of Pan-Asian Communities, a multiservice organization with programs supporting most of San Diego's Asian minorities. Ms. Yamamoto has urged county support for a comprehensive community education program, including open forums with Indochinese participation.

Health

In San Diego as elsewhere, the refugees arrive with multiple health problems stemming from long stays in the camps. There is a community perception that their presence constitutes a health hazard. The county Department of Health and Social Services seeks more federal funding, especially for control of tuberculosis.

While the city has a variety of health care facilities, refugees from all over San Diego turn up at the Linda Vista Community Clinic; that is where their friends go, and they have trouble making themselves understood at other places where there are no bilingual workers. The clinic's policy is to treat only residents of Linda Vista. When refugees from other parts of the city come in, they are treated the first time but referred elsewhere for followup treatment. The staff is afraid some of them may simply give up. It doesn't like to turn anyone away, but its resources are limited. There are other problems: applications for Medi-Cal are backed up in the Public Welfare Department, and some health care facilities will not accept Medi-Cal.

Education and ESL

The public schools in San Diego are guided by the philosophy that it is best to teach non-English-speaking students in their own languages until they can be "mainstreamed" into regular classes in English, but some state assemblymen are now objecting to what they see as too much stress on primary-language education for non-English speakers. Gil Guzman of the city school system says these protests are aimed at the undocumented aliens from Mexico, but the controversy rubs off on funding of programs that serve the refugees.

There are an estimated 2,600 refugee children in the county public schools, some 2,450 in the city--up from 750 in 1976. Most now start out with little or no English proficiency. Tutoring is provided where possible, and transportation to schools designated as language centers is furnished. Daily ESL along with primary-language instruction in mathematics, language arts, and reading is provided at such centers in Linda Vista and other sections of the city where there are sizable refugee populations.

Adult education is the province of the County Community Colleges, which have an enrollment of some 1,500 Indochinese out of a total of 5,000 people in year-round ESL programs. Refugees in ESL training in conjunction with IOEP job training are not counted in these figures. Autumn Keltner, who represents the Community Colleges on the Task Force and sits on the Refugee Coalition, says the largest number of refugee students are Vietnamese, the second largest Hmong. Mr. Vu Ker told the Task Force that of the 500 adults in his Hmong community, only 70 men and 10 women are working: "Our biggest problem . . . is the language barrier. . . . It is extremely hard to learn English in a few months if we never had the discipline of learning before. . . . Because of the language problem, we do not have an opportunity to advance ourselves."

The University of California at San Diego has an ACTION grant to place 20 student interns in agencies working with Indochinese refugees and, in response to the Governor's Task Force on Indochinese Refugees, has indicated that it may soon be able to fill a need for one or more to work in refugee assistance programs in San Diego. That will only be a drop in the bucket. Bilingual workers versed in all the languages of the refugees are needed throughout San Diego--in the schools, the courts, and virtually all the public service agencies.

GRAND RAPIDS

"We feel that we are much more fortunate than the Vietnamese families living in other areas of the United States. We have many opportunities to meet our own people, share our worries, and help one another solve our problems."

--letter from the Grand Rapids Vietnamese Community
to a local newspaper

Grand Rapids is one of the most frequently cited examples of successful Indochinese refugee resettlement in the country. VOLAG workers, government officials, media people, and refugees--all with differing perspectives on how the resettlement process should be conducted--speak with one voice on the results in Grand Rapids. The system there works. The degree to which it is transferrable to other communities is a separate question, but there are undoubtedly leaves other communities could take from its book.

There is little inherent in Grand Rapids' makeup or location to suggest that it should be exceptionally suitable for refugee resettlement. Cold winters make the climate unattractive for the Indochinese. Greater Grand Rapids, situated in the western part of the state, is primarily an industrial area with a population of some 400,000, preponderantly of Dutch extraction followed by Polish, German, and Canadian. Blacks constitute about 5% and Hispanics about 1% of the population. As the center of Michigan's Fifth Congressional District, Grand Rapids has a political and economic tradition of solid conservatism; it remained Republican throughout the New Deal years and was long represented by Congressman Gerald Ford.

When the Vietnamese refugee exodus began after the fall of Saigon in the spring of 1975, Michigan had an unemployment rate of 8 to 15%--depending on the county--and most of its Congressmen reported that constituent mail was running heavily against the acceptance of refugees. Yet Michigan received and resettled some 3,000 Vietnamese in 1975 alone. They were placed in approximately equal numbers in the Detroit area, in the western Michigan area including Grand Rapids, where about 700 settled, and in various localities throughout the rest of the state. By January 1980 the Indochinese population in Michigan had reached about 5,000, still mostly Vietnamese; 3,000 are in the western part of the state, two-thirds of them in Grand Rapids.

While Michigan is sometimes mentioned along with Idaho and Iowa as one of three states (down from five in 1977) which now directly sponsor Indochinese refugees, its sponsorship to date has not gone beyond the signing of a contract with the Department of State for resettlement of 500 refugees. That action alone marks Michigan's official attitude as more forthcoming than that of most other states, but it is not just to willingness in the state capitol that Grand Rapids owes its extraordinary success. What has made the difference in Grand Rapids is a collective leadership forged by the Reverend Howard Schipper, formerly of the Bethany Reformed Church, who in turn assigns the credit to Divine providence.

The Freedom Flight Task Force

It was the Freedom Flight Task Force (FFTF), organized by the Reverend Schipper, that moved the city of Grand Rapids to embark on a complex and highly structured refugee resettlement program in the spring of 1975. If the Reverend Schipper's inspiration was spiritual, his methods were solidly down-to-earth. Disturbed by signs of national apathy toward the plight of the refugees, he was convinced that community resources could be mobilized through local churches to help them. Working at first through his own congregation and then through a consortium of churches, he was able to enlist cooperation from leaders in four major spheres of responsibility to form the FFTF as a voluntary agency. In addition to church organizations, which handle most of the sponsorships, the FFTF grew to encompass:

+ educational institutions--the Director of Bilingual Education in Grand Rapids, the Director of Adult Community Education Programs for the school district, and the head of the local university consortium center;

+ community and human services--representatives or heads of the local Red Cross chapter, the County Department of Health, the United Way, the State of Michigan Employment Security Commission, and the county Department of Social Services;

+ business and industry--a number of successful businessmen and a CETA official; and not least in importance,

+ minority communities--several leaders of ethnic groups and advisers on community relations.

During its incipient stages in 1975 the FFTF held meetings and workshops to identify community resources, devise education programs for refugee children and adults, design a cultural awareness program for people who would be working with the refugees, and identify likely needs in preparation for the anticipated arrival of 100 Vietnamese families. Special efforts were made to publicize these plans in local media with a view to cultivating a climate of public receptivity.

Recognizing that sponsors would be critically important to the resettlement program, Reverend Schipper's group was at pains to ensure that prospective church sponsors--congregations and individual members--were equipped to receive the refugees. Sponsors were given thorough orientations and continuing support. Reverend Schipper says he was careful in selecting the sponsors, looking to them to form a community substructure that would relate to the refugees and establish an atmosphere of trust.

Reverend Schipper says the FFTF also recognized from the outset that communication across the language barrier would be critical. It therefore set about organizing a center that would serve as a clearinghouse for information on services available to the refugees and as a central registry of refugees and sponsors. The Vietnamese Center helped initiate a bilingual education program for the refugees and community education and acculturation programs. It also offered referral services, advice, and technical assistance to sponsors. In Reverend Schipper's words, the local churches served as "frontline" primary agents in the resettlement process, while the FFTF's staff and Vietnamese Center furnished rearguard support.

The system instituted in 1975 is still flourishing. The FFTF functions as a consortium of VOLAGs, which pool the money they receive from the U.S. Department of State for initial reception and resettlement. Funding for the rest of the operation comes from the Michigan Department of Social Service through a purchase-of-service contract, from a grant from Church World Service, and from other private donations. The church congregations in Grand Rapids continue to sponsor individual refugee families, under the oversight of the FFTF. Each sponsoring church undertakes to supply housing, furnishings, food, and clothing for the refugee families upon arrival, assistance in finding employment for wage-earners, and continuing support until the families become self-sufficient.

"Clustering" and the Extended Family

Reverend Schipper believes a major factor contributing to his program's success was recognition that the concept of the extended family is of prime importance in Vietnamese culture and that "clustering" of family members with relatives and close friends therefore should not be discouraged. In adopting this position in 1975, he dissented from the conventional wisdom which held at the national level that the refugees should be dispersed to avoid concentrations like that of the Cubans in Florida and at local levels that they should be dispersed to avoid creating refugee "ghettos." Declining economic conditions, which sharpened the competition for fewer jobs, were further adduced in support of the argument for dispersal.

Which approach is right? Neither and both. The conventional wisdom has proved correct at the national level: witness the "impaction" of Orange County, California. At the local level, Reverend Schipper's approach seems vindicated. He would argue that they are wrong in Albuquerque, where clustering is shunned to the point where the manager of the local public housing project takes pains to disperse refugee families throughout the apartment complex. But like "jobs versus welfare," "dispersal versus clustering" is not a simple either-or proposition. The nature of the local community, the complexion of the refugee population, and the degree to which migrations in and out are controllable all become important variables.

Grand Rapids' community has been essentially homogeneous from the outset, and Reverend Schipper is not anxious to see it diversify. He says there are a couple of hundred Lao and Cambodians now in the nearby town of Holland, but his own community has stayed almost exclusively Vietnamese and Vietnamese Chinese. About 700 to 1,000 refugees from Vietnam --mostly ethnic Chinese--came into Grand Rapids in 1979 and have been joined by some 250 so far in 1980. While there has been 100% growth of the refugee population from its 1975 level, the refugees still number only one half of one percent of the population of Greater Grand Rapids. Virtually every refugee family in Grand Rapids has relatives in the community, and the family sense of belonging has strengthened. Reverend Schipper estimates the rate of out-migration as somewhere between 15 and 20%, compared with an average of 50 to 75% in most other U.S. communities.

Education and Social Services

Social cement for the refugee community in Grand Rapids is provided by the schools' bilingual/bicultural education programs and by the social services offered through the FFTF's Vietnamese Center. The schools believe in concurrent instruction in two languages, one of them English. A Vietnamese/English bilingual program has been built on the model of a Spanish/English program that was already functioning in 1975. Some 250 Vietnamese children are enrolled in two elementary schools, a junior high school, and a high school that are designated as bilingual centers for the Vietnamese. Instruction is provided by a total of seven teachers bilingual in Vietnamese and English, six Vietnamese teacher aides, and one ESL teacher. A number of Vietnamese students have moved on after three years in the bilingual program to distinguish themselves scholastically in all-English high school classes and in the first year of college. At the adult level, more than 100 Vietnamese have signed up for ESL classes this year and the program has drawn widespread praise in the Vietnamese community.

The Vietnamese Center, with five Vietnamese on a seven-person staff augmented by volunteers from the refugee community, directs refugees both to educational programs and to a variety of other available services. The Center facilitates access to mental and physical health care, vocational training, help in adjustment to jobs, career planning and counseling, family planning, legal aid, filling out of immigration forms, liaison with the Department of Social Security and other government agencies, transportaton, driver training, and translation. The list goes on. The Center also publishes a monthly newsletter for the refugees and has produced a number of Vietnamese/English cultural and educational publications.

"Jobs First," But with Help and Incentives

The Freedom Flight Task Force is firmly committed to placement of employable refugees in jobs as early as possible, but the approach is far from one of sink or swim. Reverend Schipper has worked out a carefully orchestrated strategy, followed consistently by sponsors in tandem with the Vietnamese Center staff. The FFTF recommends that each refugee first acquire survival-level English, a matter of six to 16 weeks for the average Vietnamese coming into Grand Rapids, and then be placed in an appropriate job after careful consultation and preparation by the sponsor, job counselor, and prospective employer. The Vietnamese Center furnishes interpreters for extensive briefing of each refugee on his prospective duties. Experience has shown, Reverend Schipper says, that with this kind of support the refugees become rapidly acclimated to the work setting and pick up additional English on the job. Adult ESL classes are offered after hours.

The FFTF considers sponsor and peer pressure to be all-important. Thus the sponsor and the Vietnamese Center staff together monitor each refugee's progress. The sponsor application form submitted to the FFTF includes the statement that in agreeing to assist a refugee family with resettlement, the sponsoring church congregation "assures the FFTF that it well help [the refugee family] become self-supporting in the shortest possible time after arrival in the community . . . "

By way of incentives to refugees to pursue the "jobs first" route, the FFTF has devised its own system for using the pooled payments the State Department makes to the VOLAGs for each refugee they resettle. Each family gets $120 per person upon arrival to help meet settling-in expenses. Each household subsequently gets a $750 cash grant to help with a down payment on a car--but only if the family is not on full welfare assistance. A refugee family or extended family of seven or more is entitled to $1,000 to be used for down payment on a house--again provided the family is not on full welfare. Sponsors routinely place arriving refugees on Medicaid only. Vietnamese Center counselors and sponsors strongly encourage each employable refugee to accept a base-level job, explaining that the income supplemented by partial welfare assistance in most cases will add up to more than full welfare payments. By means of these strategies, the FFTF has been able to hold the number of unemployed refugees on full cash assistance to only about 10% of those considered employable. This figure, believed to be less than half the average for refugees nationwide, has been sustained fairly constantly since 1977.

Everyone concerned in the resettlement in Grand Rapids says employers are enthusiastic about hiring refugee workers. So far, there has been no shortage of entry-level jobs for them to fill. Media publicity for the refugees' excellent work performance and the inclusion of local businessmen in the FFTF have clearly contributed to employer interest.

Refugee Perceptions

Interviews with two resettled refugees--one from the initial group admitted in 1975 and the other, an ethnic Chinese, a 1978 arrival--largely support the claims of Reverend Schipper and the FFTF staff, with a few caveats.

On the matter of early job placement, the 1975 arrival said that by and large the Vietnamese appreciate the virtues of the FFTF strategy and follow the FFTF's counsel because they want to make a good impression on their American hosts and enable relatives and friends to come to America. Some individuals and families, she said, perhaps inevitably have second thoughts. Her husband, for example, had been a high-ranking comptroller in South Vietnam; he took an entry-level job as a warehouse worker upon arrival because he lacked fluency in English and the background to move into his own field in the United States; he is still working in the warehouse and now wonders whether it would not have been better to spend full time in intensive language and accounting studies at the beginning. He is now taking night courses at his own expense. Yet on balance, she said, her family is happy in Grand Rapids despite her husband's job situation and the frigid climate. She and her husband are particularly pleased with the progress of their four children in the bilingual program, which helps them retain their cultural identity.

The 1978 arrival said the ethnic Chinese in Grand Rapids believe they have fared relatively well compared with compatriots in other parts of the country, despite problems of language and adjustment to American ways. The information network among ethnic Chinese relatives in the United States is well developed, he said. It operates through letters, telephone conversations, and visits. On the basis of what he has learned through this network, he believes there are many pluses for the refugees in Grand Rapids and plans to stay. He contrasted Grand Rapids with other communities where Vietnamese staffs of service centers or associations demand sub-rosa payoffs from their refugee clients. (From another source, this writer learned of rumors reaching Michigan that some of the Vietnamese staffers in service organizations in Orange County, California, have been selling private insurance policies to newly arrived refugees--with very few turndowns.)

The same refugee said there had been some instances of "discrimination" against ethnic Chinese by the longer established Vietnamese, but he described these as minor and less frequent than they used to be. He spoke of the "great friendliness" of the people of Michigan in general, including Blacks and Hispanics. He took a factory assembly job at the FFTF's urging within three months of his arrival. He was at first resentful over the lack of opportunity for fulltime English training, but he now believes his employment has on balance been a boon: with the help of various service people in the area, including his factory foreman, his mother, wife, and child have been brought to Grand Rapids from a camp in Malaysia; he has placed down payments on a house and a car, he is making good progress in English, and he looks forward to advancement in his job.

MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL

"Some cynics say our problem is that we are too nice and have provided too many services."
--Jane Kretzmann, Supervisor
Minnesota Indochinese Resettlement Office

"The word is getting around that we're going to be known as Hmong-nesota."
--Ellen Ericksen, Lutheran Social Services

While Grand Rapids copes comfortably with the gradual growth of a largely homogeneous community of Vietnamese under a tested and effective system, Minneapolis-St. Paul has been overtaken by a rapid influx of Hmong refugees whose tribal social structure, unique clan relationships, and lack of literacy create serious problems over and above the sheer impact of unexpected numbers. Washington planners concerned with domestic resettlement suggested we visit the Twin Cities "because things are falling apart there in the normal way." With the unexpected a normal feature of the refugee resettlement business, a brief visit to Minneapolis-St. Paul proved instructive.

Situated close to each other on the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers, the Twin Cities are in different counties--Minneapolis is in Hennepin County and St. Paul is in Ramsey County--but function in many ways as a single metropolis. They share a number of old-line blue collar industries including General Mills, Pillsbury, and the railroads as well as newer white collar industries such as Honeywell, Minnesota Mining and Metals, and Control Data Corporation. The two cities have a combined population of about one million with an ethnic base that is primarily Swedish, Norwegian, German, and Canadian. There are few Blacks in the Twin Cities area; St. Paul's Black population, about 2% of the city's total, is larger than that of Minneapolis. Because agriculture constitutes such a large part of Minnesota's economy, the state's unemployment rate of about 4% is well below the national average. Although housing is a problem in the cities, the labor market is considered to have plenty of room for refugees. The state's large Indochinese population--estimated at 8,300 in February 1980, more at this writing--is heavily concentrated in the Twin Cities area. Only three other counties have refugee populations of 100 or more.

The Hmong and Why They Came

State welfare officials believe that some 3,500 Hmong are in Minnesota, and HEW officials say Minnesota's Hmong population is now second only to California's. Some 2,500 Hmong are clustered in and around St. Paul. They have moved in with remarkable speed. Hmong numbered only about 150 in 1975-76 and some 350 to 400 by the end of 1978. Almost all of the increase from the 1978 figure has taken place in the last six months, in large part as the result of secondary migrations. An estimated one-half to two-thirds of the newcomers are believed to have moved into the area from other states, including Montana, Hawaii, Virginia, Illinois, and Pennsylvania. Minnesota officials hope the 1980 census will shed some light on what has happened, but the picture is likely to have changed further by the time the statistics are collated.

While the Hmong population has increased, the Vietnamese communities have dwindled, though not in the same time frame. Vietnamese refugees constituted about 98% of the state's Indochinese population of 4,600 in 1975-76. By 1978 the number of Vietnamese had dropped to around 3,100. That figure has remained fairly constant, so that Vietnamese today are outnumbered by Hmong.

Opinions vary on the full explanation for the Hmong influx, but there is a consensus on the major causes. These include: (1) the presence and organizational activities of several influential Hmong leaders in the area, (2) the high quality and availability of social services in Minnesota, and (3) the attractiveness of the area's geography and economy, which are considered especially compatible with Hmong social and cultural patterns. Access to facilities for fishing and hunting are viewed as major drawing cards.

Professors Joseph Westermeyer and Tim Dunnigan of the University of Minnesota, who rank among the few scholars highly knowledgeable about Hmong culture, point out that Hmong associations and their activities are integrally related to clan relationships. The proliferation

and growing strength of these associations in the area are believed to have played a catalytic role in encouraging Hmong second migrations into Minnesota. Tou Fu Vang--now a member of the Governor's Task Force on Indochinese Refugees in Illinois--is one of several educated Hmong leaders who moved into the Twin Cities area in 1977-78, obtained employment or became otherwise active in the area, and formed associations to promote Hmong interests. The associations became increasingly active, and the influx built up as word of their successes spread to other states.

The Minnesota Indochinese Resettlement Office

Minnesota has a multi-tiered structure for the coordination of refugee resettlement, spanning both public and private service providers. At the center is the Indochinese Resettlement Office (IRO) in the Minnesota Department of Public Welfare, which draws together both informally and through interagency agreements the state's various health, education, welfare, and employment services. Each state agency with programs relevant to refugees has a staff assigned to liaison with other refugee programs. The IRO contracts with voluntary resettlement agencies for bilingual social services, employment services, ESL training, mental health services, and counseling for unaccompanied minors. A major need now among the service providers is for more Hmong interpreters and bilingual aides.

The IRO also maintains a central information and referral service which collates data on the location and ethnic makeup of refugee populations, encourages coordination and cooperative efforts among private and public agencies, and is developing a management information system for resettlement planning.

In the top tier of the structure, the Minnesota Consortium brings together nationally affiliated VOLAGs and the IRO. This group holds regular meetings to share information and experiences, coordinate efforts, review special project proposals to minimize duplicative efforts, and generally orchestrate the division of resettlement responsibilities. The Consortium focuses major efforts on coordinating sponsorships and social services. Contacts with the press are largely handled by individual agencies or through the IRO, which has served as central contact point between the media and the Consortium. Local officials say that as a result of this liaison, the media have played a helpful role in informing the public and correcting misapprehensions about the resettlement efforts.

In the lower tiers at the levels of the counties and local communities, Area Coordinating Centers have been organized by the IRO under the leadership of designated voluntary agencies to promote better cooperation and coordination among service providers. Because of the size of their established refugee populations, Ramsey and Hennepin Counties have separate coordinating bodies composed of local government departments and boards, VOLAG resettlement people, and Indochinese staffers. Their efforts are directed toward integrating services and plans in such areas as housing, health, and community relations. The problems created by the burgeoning of the Hmong population have been chiefly within the purview of these two county groups.

Jobs Vs. Welfare for the Hmong

Prior to the Hmong influx, there was little argument in the Twin Cities over the best resettlement strategy: the VOLAGs and government agencies emphasized jobs as soon as possible for the Vietnamese, who started with relatively high levels of education and were generally capable of moving into jobs after two to four months of survival-level ESL training. More than 80% of the employable Vietnamese found jobs. They adjusted well and were sought after by local employers. Local media publicized their industriousness and high motivation.

The Hmong are a different story. They come with limited if any education and limited job skills, in many cases with military backgrounds only. Although the majority of Hmong male adults have some oral facility in Laotian, many have no facility in any written language. ESL training complemented by self-study, relatively easy for the first-wave Vietnamese, is a traumatic new experience for the Hmong.

Some VOLAG staffers contend that it doesn't matter whether you give a preliterate Hmong three months' or 13 months' ESL training--he won't achieve working-level proficiency anyway. But staffers with the International Institute of Minnesota (IIM), a VOLAG that has resettled about 1,000 refugees in the state, argue that with ESL instruction techniques tailored to the Hmong and with sufficient time, the task is far from hopeless. Advocates of "jobs first" for the Hmong push for application to the Hmong of the same basic strategy that has worked with the Vietnamese, on grounds that the ESL route is at best uncertain and that employment at least would serve the psychological needs of the Hmong and lessen the drain on welfare resources. They also believe early employment would facilitate advancement on the job. Their opponents, spearheaded by the IIM, argue that the "jobs first" route would consign the Hmong permanently to menial jobs; in the IIM's view, longer training and dependence on welfare would pay off in the long run by enabling the Hmong to develop higher-level occupational skills and adjust better to their new surroundings.

Hmong are less receptive than other Indochinese refugees to advice from sponsors--an attitude ascribed to their tendency to turn first to their association and clan leaders for decisions on important issues. The Hmong leaders are concerned about their people being locked into menial jobs in perpetuity and are urging their followers to take the welfare-first route and apply for training.

There is a strong dollars-and-cents motivation for choosing welfare. With the Hmong families averaging six people, full welfare payments add up to almost as much as paychecks from entry-level jobs. There are also anomalies in the state welfare system that favor welfare over jobs. For example, one source in the state welfare administration said that a breadwinner for a family of six who earns $4.00 to $4.50 an hour and makes a total of $672 a month would be ineligible for any supplementary AFDC cash assistance under Minnesota standards; but if he went on full welfare first and then, upon being told to seek employment, found a job paying $4.00 to $4.50 an hour and earned $672 a month, he would be eligible for supplemental welfare assistance that would raise his total monthly intake to $800. It doesn't take literacy to add.

The University of Minnesota's Dr. Westermeyer, who has many friends among the Hmong, knows of Hmong who have spent several hours a day in ESL classrooms for three years and still cannot carry on a simple conversation in English. They are frustrated and embittered. Worse yet, he believes, are cases of Hmong who held high status in their own society but were placed in jobs that were menial compared with those held by their social inferiors in the clan. They have suffered from depression, loss of identity, and a sense of isolation--all far more serious to a Hmong than the mere size of a paycheck. Dr. Westermayer believes that if something can't be done to prevent such situations, there will be cases of a chronic welfare syndrome of the sort that historically has affected some American Indians. In his view, a system should be devised whereby the Hmong are placed individually in training and jobs commensurate with their standing in the clan, thereby recognizing and reinforcing their sense of identity within their social structure.

The employment rate among the Hmong in the Twin Cities is now 20 to 25%, not a surprisingly low figure in view of the very recent arrival of so many families. IRO staffers, preoccupied with the logistics of getting the new arrivals housed and fed, have had no time to plan new strategies and do not yet know how large their problem will be. The VOLAGs expect the influx of Hmong into Minnesota to continue at its present rate for a long time. HEW estimates that Hmong will account for a large share of the 10,000 refugees who will be coming into the United States monthly from Thailand under the 14,000-a-month admission quota. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, which has been receiving 100 to 150 new arrivals a month in the Twin Cities, says about 80% have been Hmong in recent months. How long the secondary migrations into Minnesota will continue and how large they will be are anybody's guess.

Housing and Community Relations

There have been no serious community problems so far in the Twin Cities as a result of the influx of Hmong, but housing is a potential source of trouble. An incident that occurred in St. Paul a few months ago was seen as a warning signal. An attractive, relatively low-rent housing project with a 75% vacancy rate became a magnet for Hmong apartment seekers. Some elements of the Black community took umbrage at what they mistakenly saw as a deliberate effort by the authorities to cluster the Hmong in the housing project. They expressed concern over the impact on housing availability, schools, and public services. The tensions were successfully defused through the joint efforts of local Black community organizations, the Ramsey County Planning Team, and other community groups. Joint efforts are continuing among Black organizations, local schools, the Inter-City Youth League, Indochinese leaders, the IRO, and interested citizens to improve the quality of life in the area, formerly predominantly Black but now 40% Hmong. A planned Indochinese cultural center will be located next door to the existing Black center with a view to fostering cooperation.

Some of the resettlement people who were interviewed believe it will be impossible to develop a new housing placement strategy without a large expenditure of resources. There is some feeling in the Twin Cities--though less obtrusive than in San Diego and Albuquerque --that the Federal Government has a responsibility to provide more help if the refugee population continues to grow. One staffer at the International Institute of Minnesota commented that "if you're going to bring in more Hmong and it causes problems, you should compensate the area for the needed additional services."

DES MOINES

"We tell our refugees, 'This country gives you only two things: entry into the United States and an opportunity to make your own way in a free society.'"
--Colleen Shearer, Director
Iowa Department of Job Services

Alone among the states, Iowa has functioned continuously as a resettlement agency since 1975. Governor Robert Ray, one of three members of the National Governors' Association Task Force on Refugees, has been personally involved in the development of national legislation relating to refugees and in promoting humanitarian efforts to assist Cambodian refugees in Southeast Asia. Extensive media publicity and frequent public appearances by the staff of the Iowa Refugee Service Center have made Iowans more conscious of the relief and resettlement efforts and better informed than people in most states. State public opinion polls taken in 1975 and 1979 showed more than 50% of Iowans opposed to admission of larger numbers of refugees, with negative responses about on a par with the percentages in national polls, yet a recent month-long campaign called Iowa SHARES (Iowa Sends Help to Aid Refugees and End Starvation) raised half a million dollars in small public donations for Cambodian refugee relief.

The resettlement effort in Des Moines is an integral part of a highly structured statewide resettlement program. Housing has not posed serious problems; landlords reportedly like renting to refugees. The unemployment rate is only 4%, and jobs are available for the refugees in agriculture-related industries and in light manufacturing and various small concerns. Reporting on Iowa's refugee program last July, the WALL STREET JOURNAL noted some grumbling in Des Moines' small Black community (3% of the population) over alleged preferential treatment of refugees in hiring at a time when the employment rate for Black youth stood at 40%. But people on the scene today say these feelings have died down and note that Black leaders are sponsoring several refugee families.

However mixed the public feelings may be, the state government has been able to follow through on its exceptional commitment to the refugee effort and to sustain a relatively trouble-free program. Criticism has come not from people opposed to helping refugees but from officials in other state governments in the region and from private VOLAGs in Des Moines which dissent from the state's uncompromising, almost puritannical stress on fulltime employment at once for all employable adult refugees.

Scope and Structure

The state has applied this formula to the 3,000-odd refugees it has brought in since 1975--some 54 to 57% of the Indochinese resettled in Iowa. They include 1,900 Tai Dam, an ethnic minority from Laos, brought in at the start of the program in 1975. State officials point to the successful Tai Dam community--the only one in the United States--as vindication of the work-oriented approach. The Tai Dam, like the Hmong, were mostly preliterate when they arrived. State officials also point to the low out-migration rate, noting that of some 6,000 Indochinese refugees brought into the state, about 5,000 have remained. Nearly half of them, including the Tai Dam, live in Polk County in and around Des Moines.

The Iowa resettlement offices of the Catholic and Lutheran services, Church World Service, and Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society have followed their own counsel with respect to jobs versus welfare but draw on extensive services furnished by the Iowa Refugee Service Center (IRSC), which functions both as the state voluntary agency and as a clearinghouse and referral center for all VOLAGs, sponsors, and refugees.

Organizationally a part of the Iowa Department of Job Services, the IRSC administers all public services relevant to refugees. It receives HEW/IRAP funds from the Department of Job Services to cover administrative costs and pools the money it gets from the U.S. State Department for refugee reception and resettlement, giving some directly to the refugees or their sponsors and holding the rest in the state treasury as an emergency fund for refugees.

Services are administered by five IRSC divisions concerned with employment, social services, education and family reunification, communications and publications, and coordination of volunteer work. The Communications and Publications Division prepares cultural and informational material in Indochinese languages for statewide use, publishes a tabloid called IOWA ORIENTING EXPRESS in English, Vietnamese and Laotian, and produces weekly half-hour broadcasts in Vietnamese and Laotian. It coordinates all publicity and media contacts relating to refugees and maintains a speakers' bureau that serves organizations throughout Iowa. The Volunteer and Grants Coordination Division oversees a Volunteer Tutor Program and organizes volunteers to distribute privately donated clothing, furniture, and other articles to refugees.

The IRSC's staff of 15 people includes six "Indochinese outreach" workers with capability in all the major Indochinese languages. Mrs. Colleen Shearer, Director of the Department of Job Services, also directs the IRSC and spearheads the state government's vocal defense of its strictly "work-oriented program."

Work Ethic or "Welfare Junkies"?

Kenneth Quinn, a U.S. State Department officer serving under an exchange arrangement as Governor Ray's coordinator of refugee affairs, reflects the Governor's view in commenting that refugee reliance on welfare "poisons the climate of acceptability." Mrs. Shearer echoes these sentiments in arguing that the American public will turn against the refugees if they clog the welfare pipeline and sink into a welfare mentality. She estimates that as many as half of the Indochinese refugees in the United States are now receiving welfare assistance; officials in other states in the region dispute the high figure, but Mrs. Shearer comments that one can come up with any figures one wants depending on how "welfare" is defined. Mrs. Shearer does not object to refugees receiving supplemental cash assistance if they are employed fulltime, but she is basically against the whole concept of welfare. She laments a nationwide increase in "street wise" refugees who have learned to milk the system and favors a radical reform that would turn the system around to emphasize employment. Her prescription for a national refugee assistance program, outlined last June before the National Coalition for Refugee Resettlement, would take the IRAP money now pumped into the states through HEW and funnel it instead through the Department of Labor to surface in the states as unemployment insurance. Refugees could draw unemployment benefits under the laws of the states in which they resided. Mrs. Shearer believes this approach would encourage refugees to live by the work ethic, thereby making their presence more acceptable to the American people and ensuring that more could be admitted.

The state practices what it preaches and firmly defends its anti-welfare approach against a local opposition which argues, in the words of Sister Pat Scherer of Catholic Social Services (CSS), that "if you take the refugees off the planes and put them in factories, they are going to be in factories for the rest of their lives." Sister Scherer asks: "Why don't we provide them with a future?"

Mrs. Shearer and her colleagues believe the future belongs to the children, not to the refugee adults, who cannot realistically hope to adapt fully to U.S. society. The IRSC thinks it is Quixotic to expect miracles from training. It contends that with or without training, most refugee adults cannot expect to progress far beyond base-level jobs. Mrs. Shearer believes their situation can be explained to them with both frankness and sympathetic understanding, and "they can take it." The IRSC staffers have no objection to ESL or other adult education programs provided the refugees take such training on their own time. They consider it of overriding importance that the refugees go to work, do not become public charges, and avoid the demoralizing inroads of a welfare mentality which can also rub off on the children. Unlike the private VOLAGs, the IRSC insists on assigning individual or group sponsors to each refugee family it brings in. Sponsors are carefully primed to counsel the refugees, steer them into jobs, and work with them as long as they need moral and physical support.

Sister Scherer cites her own experience in rejecting the IRSC's pessimistic view of adult training. She says CSS applied the jobs-at-once formula to about a hundred Vietnamese families in 1975-76 with the result that 80% left the area. CSS switched to a welfare-cum-training approach with later arrivals; the out-migration rate dropped, the Vietnamese found satisfactory jobs, and the community stabilized. She maintains that some refugees can and do benefit from training: it is an individual matter, and everyone should have the opportunity to try. She is convinced that most Indochinese are too proud to remain public charges once they acquire the skills to support themselves. Like Mel McCutchan in Albuquerque, she says most of them want to work.

The IRSC draws no distinction among refugee groups, noting that the Tai Dam have made extraordinary progress via the employment route and that a third of them are buying their own homes. But Sister Scherer recalls the case of seven Hmong who were placed in jobs immediately upon arrival in 1978 and failed to make the grade because they couldn't understand the instructions; after extensive ESL and job skills training, all seven found new jobs and kept them. She believes not only that the new Hmong arrivals will need intensive ESL instruction but that new techniques should be explored to accommodate their special needs. With long waiting lists for ESL classes, she sees welfare as the only option for the new Hmong families--70 to 80% of the refugees her agency is now bringing in. Several Hmong leaders have weighed in with criticism of the IRSC program as too rigid, and the Des Moines TRIBUNE has publicized their view.

The debate continues in Des Moines, both privately and on the pages of the TRIBUNE and the REGISTER. While it revolves chiefly around welfare, it also encompasses other aspects. The case of a Hmong head of household in Fairfield, Iowa, who led his family in a mass suicide attempt has fanned discussion of what may be wrong with the resettlement program. The story of the Hmong family, recounted by Calvin Trillin in the March 24 issue of THE NEW YORKER, leaves many questions unanswered. IRSC staffers tend to give credence to speculation that the Hmong's perception--or misperception--of a Lao family's actions as inimical may have played a part in his decision to take his life and that of his family. They also believe the case points up the importance of assigning carefully chosen and well trained sponsors to each refugee family. According to Calvin Trillin, the homesick and despondent Hmong suffered above all from a monstrous communciation problem. Sister Scherer could find much in the story to support her position, too.

CONCLUSIONS

The wide disparity among the states in their receptivity to the refugees, their management of the resettlement process, and their administration of public assistance makes central planning and oversight a very tall order. The number of agencies and departments involved at all levels compounds the problem of equitable allocation of resources. Given the labyrinthian nature of American governmental bureaucracy, it seems unlikely that current efforts to streamline the resettlement machinery will fully catch up with the flow of refugees in the next couple of years. Funding is tight and will get tighter. Community attitudes toward the refugees are likely to become less hospitable--and in cities like Albuquerque indifference could turn into hostility--as federal revenue sharing is curtailed and competition for reduced funding sharpens.

A key issue for the policy planners is whether the United States should sustain the present refugee admission quota above the "normal flow" and cut back on support services or cut back on admissions and provide better support. Many local people on the firing lines, frustrated by day-to-day problems, perceive "the feds" as a homogeneous, rich bureaucracy that seldom puts its money where its mouth is. They argue that they need more support if they are to do the job even halfway right, and they believe the money is there to be handed out. A logical answer would be to reduce the number of admissions if the money can't be found. Yet we talked to a number of people in the federal system as well as in the VOLAGs who believe the welfare machinery is overblown. While they would not go as far as Mrs. Shearer in Iowa, they are convinced that ways could be found to accelerate refugee self-help and self-sufficiency through a redirection of some of the funding spent on public assistance. We think they are right.

The first need is for central policy guidelines and a clear statement of priorities, though the people responsible for formulating overall goals will have a fine line to tread if they are to avoid over-management and an effort to control the uncontrollable. Guidelines must be flexible enough to allow for changing and widely differing circumstances among the states and localities. The formulation of goals and strategies must also take into account the differences among the refugee populations--particularly the differences between the first-wave Vietnamese and the unskilled, illiterate or near-illiterate peasants who are coming in today in increasing numbers.

The same caveat applies to guidelines for the VOLAGs. We believe the VOLAG system is basically a sound one, not least because it obviates a need for proliferation of the governmental bureaucracy. But in properly writing more specific goals and guidance into its contracts with the VOLAGs with a view to monitoring their performance, the State Department would do well to make sure the goals are realistically in line with the funding. Contract or no contract, local resettlement offices will spend their money first to meet the new arrivals' most urgent needs for food and housing and may have little or none left over. Post mortems of the new contracts after six months or a year could be helpful to both the VOLAG and the Department. Regional conferences bringing together State Department officials, national or regional VOLAG directors, and local resettlement directors might be tried out as a format and, if successful, repeated on a periodic basis.

On the issue of how self-reliance and self-sufficiency can best be achieved, we found persuasive evidence that acculturation and mastery of English is accelerated by early employment, but here again there is a caveat: different groups of refugees have differing needs. We believe adult job-training and counseling programs should get high priority and, where federally funded, should be periodically evaluated to ensure that they are productive. We also believe more support is needed for programs to retrain refugees who have transferrable professional skills that are still unutilized. Local communities badly need Indochinese doctors and paraprofessionals in a variety of occupations. A statement of the philosophy and goals of resettlement should give primacy to self-sufficiency and make some effort to define it, but should avoid a too simplistic presentation of the issue as "jobs versus welfare" that could be conducive to mechanistic solutions.

As for the administration of public welfare, we believe HEW procedural guidelines should be consolidated in orderly fashion in a single manual for use by welfare case workers, prefaced by a clear exposition of the self-sufficiency goal.

Beyond welfare, inventories of government-funded projects relating to refugee support would create a helpful base for judging whether federal money is being spent to best advantage. Mechanisms should be developed to assess each new project proposal as fully as possible in the context of the total needs of the relevant community. To facilitate this approach, the Federal Government might use what leverage it has to encourage the establishment of local coordinating bodies where they do not now exist. Such bodies seem essential both for the gathering of necessary data and for identifying community needs. They would also facilitate communication among local service providers and a reduction of duplicative efforts.

There are unquestionably duplicative efforts now, both within and among communities. Regional conferences of people directly concerned with resettlement could promote sharing among communities. Materials everyone needs could be developed centrally. They include basic orientation, training, and teaching materials, as well as forms and documents translated into the languages of the refugee populations. Some local offices have translated some forms into some of the needed languages, and interpreters are widely used to convey information orally where translations are unavailable. Central translation centers, state as well as federally funded, could produce standardized translations of official documents and eliminate a great deal of waste motion all around.

For as long as interpreters are critical to the communication process--and they will be needed for a long time--provision should be made for training them in orientation skills and ensuring that they pass along accurate information. This function seems most appropriately performed at local levels.

In general, we believe funding for ESL, for programs that combine ESL with acculturation, and for programs that combine ESL with vocational training should be high on the priority list. The language barrier is at the root of innumerable problems in virtually every area. Current plans for extensive orientation and ESL training of refugees overseas, while they are awaiting admission in camps and reprocessing centers, should help to alleviate the burden on the VOLAGs and local service providers in the future. We found these plans welcomed everywhere. But they won't help the people already here.

Orientation of the refugees is only one side of the coin. Community acceptance is crucial to the success of refugee resettlement, and the orientation must go both ways. From the national level on down, concerted efforts should be made to publicize the facts about the refugees and the policies and procedures governing the resettlement if widespread misapprehensions are to be corrected. Community forums should be organized--with participation of the Indochinese themselves. The refugees should be encouraged to play as large a part as they can in the entire resettlement effort.

We believe more could be done in cooperation with private industry. Incentives for the wider involvement of private industry in job development and job-skills training for refugees should be explored. We believe the private sector could play a constructive--and profitable--role in developing strategies for redirecting the flow of refugees away from heavily impacted areas like Orange County and toward new magnet communities, as well as for relieving pressures on impacted areas. This is not a country where a grand design for orderly dispersal of the refugee population can be imposed by fiat. The refugees are free to go where they wish. Like everyone else, they will be attracted to places where the jobs are, and strategies that would match the job market to the potential refugee labor force might work in some localities. Publicity should be given to imaginative approaches like the effort to add shrimping to the local fishing industry along the Gulf Coast of Texas, building the area's economic base while accommodating the refugee population. Such strategies could serve the mutual interests of the industries and the communities.

Part of the problem now is that large numbers of refugees from rural backgrounds are being forced into employment in urban settings, compounding the difficulty of adjustment to an alien culture. We would favor encouragement of the organization of agricultural cooperatives where refugee families could engage in small-scale farming. Some early farm sponsorships in New Mexico failed because the Vietnamese could not cope with the isolation of farm life in the state. Cooperative ventures would get around that difficulty. In urban areas, cooperative housing projects could foster self-reliance and alleviate housing problems.

There may be objections to the co-op approach on grounds that it would foster segregation and create "ghettos." But the clustering of refugees is not the same thing as the segregation of Blacks, which was a product of socioeconomic discrimination. Ghettos have been imposed by tyranny, poverty, and prejudice. Nobody refers to successful Chinese or Japanese communities in this country as "ghettos." No one sees the Vietnamese community in Grand Rapids as a ghetto. The agglomeration of refugee populations is both healthy and natural. It eases the trauma of adjustment, it keeps extended families together, and it facilitates collective self-help.

Overlaying some of the concern about impaction is a szchizophrenic American attitude toward integration and ethnicity. The concept of assimilation--the United States as a melting pot--has increasingly given way to the search for ethnic roots and the cultivation of ethnic identities. Yet there is a double standard when it comes to the Indochinese: they are too different, they keep alive memories of an unpopular war, and many Americans want them to blend rapidly and unobtrusively into the atmosphere. The children will integrate naturally as they move up through American schools, but real integration is too much to expect from most of the adults. At best, it will be a slow process.

In the final analysis, the size and scope of an effective support structure for Indochinese refugee resettlement cannot exceed levels acceptable to the American people. We think Bob Caldwell of the SAN DIEGO UNION put it very well:

> If the United States is to have a sustained program, it has to be defensible. It would be better to have a relatively modest program that can be sustained than a "terrific" program that could be blown out of the water for lack of support.

We agree. We do not believe the admission quotas have been excessive. We believe a relatively modest federal support program can work, given a definition of realistic goals and a sorting out of priorities to place greater emphasis on programs that will serve the objectives of refugee self-help and self-reliance.

While federal programs and guidelines can and should set the tone for the nationwide effort, it will be at local levels, through local ingenuity motivated by local concern, that "terrific" programs will develop where the circumstances are right.

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